

Standing Joint Force Headquarters - Core Element

The mission of the U.S. Joint Forces Command Standing Joint Force Headquarters-Core Element is to provide the warfighter with a trained, standing core element to enable the joint task force commander to command and control joint and multinational assigned forces. The SJFHQ-CE is a team of operational planners and command and control specialists. This team of planning, operations, information management and information superiority experts form the backbone of the JTF command structure.

During day-to-day operations, the SJFHQ-CE is assigned to a theater commander. When a crisis develops in a theater, the SJFHQ-CE can be assigned to a JTF headquarters where it brings the knowledge base, collaborative tools and contacts from the centers of excellence to the JTF. This enables more proactive and coherent advanced planning and quicker use of capabilities than can be accomplished by ad hoc stand up of a JTF headquarters.

The SJFHQ stood up in summer 2003 under Air Force Brig. Gen. Marc E. Rogers. CHIPS interviewed Rogers during the launching of the SJFHQ and revisited the SJFHQ-CE to ask the current staff to assess its effectiveness three years after it was developed. (Rogers' interview can be found at http://www.chips.navy.mil/archives/03_summer/web%20pages/SJFHQ.htm.) CHIPS spoke with Chief, Standards and Readiness Division, Army Col. Paul Haveles; Navy captains Jeffrey Hood and Alan Hollingsworth; and Navy Cmdr. Kevin Robinson in November 2006 onboard Naval Station Norfolk.

CHIPS: Has the vision for SJFHQ been met?

Col. Haveles: As we fielded the organization under Brig. Gen. Rogers, we realized that our name carried a misconception. The SJFHQ name gave a perception to some people that we were a headquarters. Based on Adm. Giambastiani's (former commander of Joint Forces Command) guidance in January 2004, we have added the term or identifier 'core element.' SJFHQ's 58 people are what we call a core element.

The true term for the group that deploys is Standing Joint Force Headquarters-Core Element. They are not a headquarters, but they are the foundation upon which to build the headquarters or to help someone else build a headquarters.

The initial guidance was that all combatant commands would have a SJFHQ-CE by the end of fiscal year 2005.

That is a true statement; SJFHQ-CEs exist in some form or another at U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. European Command. As with any organization in the Department of Defense, now the struggle is over manpower because the global war on terror and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are taking a lot of manpower. There are not available personnel, and the SJFHQ-CEs may not get 100 percent of their manning.

They are meeting the intent of the design to get a core element fielded for each combatant command so each commander has the ability to facilitate the standup of a joint task force headquarters within his area of responsibility.

Since that guidance and your interview with Brig. Gen. Rogers, JFCOM has received guidance to stand up two operational core elements. Captains Jeffrey Hood and Alan Hollingsworth and Cmdr. Kevin Robinson are members of the operational core elements here at JFCOM.

One of the core elements has been tasked to support U.S. Central Command because it does not have its own core element. Now each geographic combatant command has a core el-

ement to facilitate the rapid stand up of a service component headquarters to a joint task force headquarters, which was the original intent of the guidance. Three years later, we are getting there.

Are we at the total end state of where we wanted to be or the original documents wanted us to be? No. We have adjusted based on command guidance, leadership, environments and manpower.

CHIPS: Brig. Gen. Rogers compared the SJFHQ-CE to another weapon system in the U.S. military arsenal. Is this still a good comparison?

Col. Haveles: The analogy that Gen. Rogers used is in terms of its management — how the Department of Defense manages a weapon system from its conception, revision, fielding and program management. The SJFHQ needs to be managed in that same manner. The SJFHQ-CE was conceptualized in the late 1990s. It was tested during Millennium Challenge 2002, and it was fielded from 2003 to 2005.

Capt. Hood: The weapons system that he used refers to how the Air Force made its Air Operations Centers, the centers that control all the aviation assets that operate in theater. The Air Force termed this as a weapon system for the reasons the colonel was talking about — the whole life cycle of a weapons system including training students through the Air Force Command and Control Warrior School — and all the way to making them an integral part of the AOC. Even though the SJFHQ-CE is on a smaller scale, it is still a weapons system with a command and control team aligned with tools, trained personnel, and it has a life cycle.

CHIPS: What is the most important capability that you bring to an operational commander?

Capt. Hood: The most important capability that we bring is the personnel that are trained in joint processes of command and control. Having worked together we are



U.S. European Command Joint Enabling Team and USJFCOM SJFHQ-CE personnel onboard USS Mount Whitney during Joint Task Force Lebanon in August 2006.

familiar with each other, we know the processes, we know our strengths and weaknesses, and we can be put into another organization, or we can have another organization come in on top of us.

We bring the initial capability of a trained staff able to speed the establishment of a joint task headquarters and the training, joint processes, and command and control systems that we would use in the various headquarters — that is our strongest capability.

Cmdr. Robinson: When the SJFHQ-CE for a combatant commander goes into theater what it brings is a combination of subject matter experts who are trained in joint operations across all spectrums of the military. The SJFHQ-CE knows how the combatant commander thinks, and this is part of how we enable that rapid stand up of those joint task forces and their headquarter elements.

CHIPS: Is there any problem in applying doctrine in a multi-service environment?

Cmdr. Robinson: You will always have service tendencies. The thing we typically see, for example, is Army Soldiers think as land-centric folks, Navy personnel think as sea-centric folks, and so on, but the joint doctrine is universal. What we bring is knowledge of how the other services work because we are continuously working with them in a headquarters environment. This allows us to learn how the other services think so proceeding with their service planning is not foreign to me as a naval officer.

Those seams between the services get reduced significantly because we are continuously working in that joint environment from a common doctrine.

CHIPS: How is the SJFHQ-CE different from the commander's staff? Doesn't he have the same skill sets and tools on his staff?

Col. Haveles: You have service component headquarters that exist — Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines. They have service-specific capabilities, and they focus on the tactical fight because that is what each service does. The transition is to a joint task force commander, who now has to think at the operational level of war with the integration of all the services capabilities, other agencies of the U.S. government and the integration of coalition partners.

The services don't normally think in these terms. The people of our core elements bring that perspective of the operational level of war with the integration of interagency and coalition partners to help him and his staff come up from that tactical fight to the operational level fight.

Service component headquarters personnel have those skills inherently in their military training, but they do not use them all the time because they are focused on their service area. Core element people help build the ability to think, work and function in the joint multinational interagency environment that they normally don't do on a day-to-day basis.

The JTF functions in a slightly different battle rhythm and thought process that has to know the combatant commander's intent. They bring that perspective, so that it gets spread through more of the staff as opposed to just commander to commander.

CHIPS: Does the SJFHQ-CE work with interagency organizations?

Col. Haveles: Yes. At the operational level of war, at the joint task

force level, that is a normal operating event — to work in the multinational interagency environment. That is why the people of the core element must have that skill set and understanding of the interagency environment.

Cmdr. Robinson: Each core element here at JFCOM, for example, has a planner who is regularly developing interagency relationships by participating in discussions with a government agency. In my job as a maritime planner only a small portion of those I work with are U.S. Navy. I have to think about how we can utilize multinational navies as well as what other instruments of national power can be brought to bear in a situation.

We are continuously thinking how the multinational or the interagency piece fits into what we are doing. We are working on this on a daily basis depending on the operation we are planning. Two years ago I was thinking about driving ships, and now I am thinking about how I interface with the Department of State.

CHIPS: Can you talk about the collaborative information environment that you help the combatant commander establish?

Col. Haveles: The collaborative information environment is not a network or an application. It is a combination of four pillars: people, process, tools and the environment. It is a perspective on the workplace and how to get things done. By using a collaborative information environment, as people from the JTF headquarters build a plan, components of the subordinate units, the higher units, the combatant commander's staff and the Joint Staff are also participating.

You can have higher, parallel and subordinate organizations all participating in the building of your operational plan at the same time. It's coordinated, it's synchronized, it's smoother, and participants can agree to what capabilities they are required to provide.

During operations, rather than a stovepipe small element participating, there is a broader environment that reaches throughout the JTF headquarters and its components participating in the command and control of operations. It spreads out the knowledge base; it spreads out the information. It allows us to streamline our operations and make them more efficient.

The SJFHQ-CE personnel bring an understanding of the collaborative information environment with them. They can sit down at a workstation and reach out through collaborative tools and processes to other combatant commands to centers of influence, to other U.S. agency players and learn how to work with other people outside of their own level of expertise.

The core element, which is made up of 58 people does not have to have experts in every single field of endeavor. These 58 people can reach out to the expertise they need. It also means that everybody does not have to go into the theater of operations.

You can reach back through the collaborative information environment to people who are working in an operations center in Norfolk. You can still provide the required support, information and capability to the JTF commander. That is part of the value of the collaborative information environment.

I will not get into countries or specifics, but we collaborate with folks all around the world from here in Norfolk on a regular basis. We use multiple tools to do that — conference calls, video teleconferencing or voice-over-Internet Protocol headsets over a computer.

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— Army Col. Paul Haveles
U.S. Joint Forces Command SJFHQ-CE

Years ago people did not think like that. They did not think about reaching out to other centers of excellence. They tried to work with whatever expertise they had on hand and their view of the world. Their view of their capabilities was limited to the expertise that was in the room. The collaborative information environment says that I can reach out to whatever experts I need to get the best answer or solution.

CHIPS: How heavily do you rely on technology?

Col. Haveles: Reliance? I am not sure that I would say reliance. Every one of us (if we needed to) could probably pull out a butcher block and a board and do what we need to do. We exploit the technological capabilities of today to use them to further our capabilities and our ability to conduct operations. I resist the term 'rely on' technology because I believe that the implication is that if it was not there I could not do operations.

The people on our teams could do their job with zero electricity — if they had to. They have been in austere environments in other countries — in Afghanistan and Pakistan — with limited technology capabilities and been able to do their job just fine. We exploit the technology; we use it to its maximum potential.

Capt. Hollingsworth: Technology is an enabler. Specific technologies are enablers, and we can use various pathways depending upon which systems are available and functioning for us. If a specific system that is our preferred method is not working, we might have two or three other redundant systems or methods that we can use. If there is none available, it will affect how we do what we do, but we still would have the ability to function.

CHIPS: Does the SJFHQ-CE help with the enormous amounts of data and intelligence the commander receives?

Capt. Hood: With the advent of technology, the commander has more opportunities to receive more critical information. In that aspect, technology is critical to what we do. It gives us that advantage with all that extra information. It speeds his ability to make decisions and affects his decision cycle, assuming that the information is handled properly. Information overload is very easy.

Within the SJFHQ-CE are knowledge managers whose focus is to make meaning out of that information and make it such that it is sorted, displayed and provided in usable bits to the different elements of the staff, so that the commander can make decisions and speed his decision process. Within our information superiority cells

we have people with intelligence backgrounds who do traditional analysis.

Cmdr. Robinson: Besides the information superiority section, the SJFHQ-CE is cross-functionally organized. You do not have the old Napoleonic organization of J1, J2 and J3. In the planning cell or planning portion of SJFHQ we have intelligence planners. What they bring to the table is that as the plans group is making a plan or the operations group is executing an operation, those cross-functional members are already there.

When analysis is being done by the information superiority team, someone from the plans team is regularly interfacing with them, integrally involved in the planning process. This provides the combination of moving people with cross-functional areas into various teams and gives you a synergistic affect across the core element.

Capt. Hollingsworth: Beyond the core element members and the groups that have already been discussed, we also have systems of systems analysts, who provide information processing and mining that assists the core element teams and the supported combatant commanders.

Col. Haveles: The only piece of clarity that I want to give you is that the SJFHQ-CE is not doing data analysis and intelligence preparation. The JTF headquarters that the SJFHQ-CE is plugging into and augmenting is doing this. We are helping them with their process on how to analyze data.

CHIPS: What else would a SJFHQ-CE provide?

Capt. Hollingsworth: I deployed in August for Joint Task Force Lebanon. The core of the JTF was the 6th Fleet staff led by Commander, Sixth Fleet and Deputy Commander, Naval Forces Europe Vice Adm. John Stufflebeem. Personnel from other parts of EUCOM — Army, Air Force and Marine Corps forces manned the rest of the JTF headquarters.

The SJFHQ-CE equivalent from EUCOM — the Joint Enabling Team (JET) — provided people with certain skill sets that they were short on in the JTF staff. Joint Forces Command provided nine people, two from other elements and seven from SJFHQ, with additional JTF skill sets that the JET needed. The JET helped JTF Lebanon stand up in a couple of days and accept the responsibility for the evacuation of American citizens from Lebanon as well as the support and potential evacuation of the American Embassy in Lebanon, a mission the JTF had not been trained for.

As a joint task force headquarters they had been trained to fight an air campaign, something similar to what was done in Kosovo and Bosnia in the 1990s. By bringing a SJFHQ-CE equivalent from EUCOM, supplemented with skills from JFCOM, we were able to take a JTF oriented around an air mission — refocus it — and give it the capability to conduct land and sea-focused missions.

It would have taken three to four weeks for the JTF to be able to prepare for that same mission without the specialists that were brought in. In that deployment we were able to reach back from on-board the USS Mount Whitney (LCC/JCC 20) in the Mediterranean Sea to our building in Norfolk and draw on the special skills and analysis of our people back here. They would not have been accessible to the JTF had we not been participating in the JTF standup.

This was a good demonstration of the capability the standing

core group of JTF experts can bring to an environment when something unexpected occurs, and the JTF is not prepared.

We had to coordinate getting Army land-based helicopters from Germany to Cypress where they could support the U.S. Embassy. We had to look at the qualification of those helicopters to operate off our ships — if they needed to land on our deck in between the two land masses. We were bringing in Air Force helicopters to provide armed escort and support if needed. We learned that the Army helicopters were not outfitted and trained to pick people out of the water.

There were a lot of complicated issues that a group of people within the headquarters staff of 6th Fleet and even the European Command may not have been aware of and noted without bringing in people with cross-functional skills and expertise.

Capt. Hood: Since your last interview we have had a couple of opportunities to employ SJFHQ-CE. The captain just alluded to JTF Lebanon. One thing that you may have noticed is that none of them have used the entire textbook construct of the SJFHQ-CE deploying as an entire group. We have chosen to tailor it, which is one of the benefits of a tailorable package, to be able to give combatant commanders exactly what they need.

We supported the Department of Homeland Security during Katrina in the planning cell. We sent about 40 people down to Baton Rouge at the joint field office to provide planning support. This was the initial deployment for Core Element – Alpha.

After that we supported the Expeditionary Strike Group 1 and Rear Adm. Michael LeFever in Islamabad, Pakistan. We sent a team to become an integral part of his staff in Islamabad coordinating the humanitarian relief effort following the earthquake.

After that we sent a core element team into Afghanistan to Combined Joint Task Force 76 to stand up a new task force. We provided planners, intelligence and operations personnel to speed that task force for CJTF 76. That mission lasted about six months with varying levels of support personnel. It is now finishing off with support to ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Our most current effort is to provide an augmentation to U.S. Central Command Air Forces. CENTAF was charged with standing up a headquarters to provide support for Internal Look '07, which is an exercise with follow-on operations. We have a team deployed providing support as an augment to CENTAF providing the full spectrum of capabilities that we bring as a JTF.

CHIPS: Can you talk about the stand up of the SJFHQ-CE for CENTCOM?

Capt. Hood: Central Command (being occupied with two major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan) did not have the personnel available to stand up its own core element. JFCOM has two core elements and has opted to dedicate one of our core elements to CENTCOM for planning purposes. If CENTCOM needs one — we will be there.

Air Force Gen. Lance Smith, commander of JFCOM (and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation) dedicated one of his core elements for planning purposes. A relationship is forming between the Central Command staff and the Central Command component headquarters, like its CENTAF and U.S. Central Command Naval Forces, or NAVCENT, to understand what this core element does and what its capabilities are.

CHIPS: When you deploy is there an average length of time that you can assist?

Capt. Hood: I think that the length of time we are deployed is dependent on the supported commander and what he needs. Since we are not aligned with a geographic combatant commander, if CENTCOM needs us, we will go as long as it needs us.

There are planning factors that we would like to adhere to, but we will provide the support that the commander needs for the duration that he needs it.

CHIPS: Is it part of your mission to train the commander's staff?

Cmdr. Robinson: Within Joint Forces Command, J7 is responsible for training. But any person who brings expertise to a staff has, in typical military fashion, the duty to train others. If we come as people who have a skill set and extra training in joint procedures, processes and tools we will share that training, but we do not roll in as the trainers. That is not a mission of the SJFHQ-CE. But we will, if we are turning over the mission, do 'left seat, right seat' type training where we train our reliefs and then let them take the seat.

Capt. Hollingsworth: When we went over for JTF Lebanon, the bulk of the task force had already been through more than a year of training and preparation to be certified as a joint task force. However, there were a lot of people who had turned over and had not been through all of that training. The guy on our team who had the most experience and expertise took aside several members of the JTF headquarters and went through the same training material that we received when we were training here at SJFHQ-CE.

Another thing that we were able to do was to help the effects-based cell team members to integrate what they were doing with the joint planning group of the JTF headquarters. The guys who were analyzing the effects of our actions were also integrated with the guys making plans — instead of having two separate functions without a connection.

CHIPS: Have you helped the Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa?

Capt. Hollingsworth: My core element, Core Element B, went through the mission rehearsal exercise which was one of the last major training steps for the task force headquarters that is over there now. We did that in February 2006, and when they deployed and assumed the Horn of Africa mission we sent a small group of people with certain skill sets that they needed. We have had three to seven people from our core element, at any one time, in the Horn of Africa.

They have had some interesting experiences helping to engage with the national militaries and also with the other government agencies and non-government organizations that are working in that part of the world.

For more information about the Standing Joint Force Headquarters-Core Element, go to the U.S. Joint Forces Command Web site at http://www.jfcom.mil/about/fact_sjfhq.htm. Or you may contact the SJFHQ strategic communications specialist at (757) 836-9730 or DSN 836.

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